4/21/70

Dear Howard,

There is a potentially great value in your Nichols interview and, assuming you told him no more than you record, no less great danger of your having cut him in a position to louse more up. You paid no attention to my appraisal of his character, avoided any recall of his established ego/greed/dishonesty, and I will explain what I mean below.

He handled you much better than you are aware, told you virtually nothing he hadn't told me (notable exception, being the Connally picture), and apparently is well aware of the friendship and trust between us. His more recent exploits consist of interviewing witnesses relatives, in areas of the case of which, as you noted, he has no knowledge, to establish what he regards as my errors. John has begun to run some kind of campaign against me, for reasons I may never be able to isolate.

That his 399 base picture shows what I spotted in yours is important because, from what I recall of what you said, it was taken earlier than yours. I have dated it at about ~~xmas~~ 5/68. When was yours taken? I think it is important to establish how soon after mine were taken it was doctored. This is important to do before I get thisi into court for mreasons at this point I will not tell anyone.

People working on the same material in different ways all have their own rights to do what they would do, to believe what they will, etc. But when you knew what I was doing with the Archives on those tabs, I regard it as a serious breach to have gone into this with him. The original concept that the shirt was never touched by a bullet is mine. You have every right to follow this up as you please, But especially when you knew what John is and has been up to, you made a very serious blunder to tell him these things. You have his immediate reaction, that of an octopus at best. I am really disappointed in this, particularly because as soon as he starts crapping around with it he will immediately jeopardize the negotiations in which I am engaged and of which I have kept you au courant. I go into this not to give you hell, for at this point that would serve no purpose, but so that you can perhaps understand why I cautioned you in advance and got your promise you would tell him nothing. Howard, for your years you are fantastic, but as I believe I've told you before, you must learn that there is but so much you have been able to learn of your own experience, especially about the seamier parts of life and people and especially about deceptive people who design their deceptions. There is a proper tendency in all of us to communicate what we can to others who we always want to believe have the best intentions, identical with our own. Alas, too many are not this way, as you are learning.

When he says his Archives pictures cannot be copies, this is nonsense, which is the reason I extracted his promise to neither copy nor use before I showed him my work. If you want to see pictures stamped by the Archives and identified as his, come look at them. The Archives, and properly, makes all pictures accessible. I might prefer otherwise, but this is their concept. All he can copyright is what he didn't, and that is his use or interpretation. Where you refer to his theft of Dick's work, you say, as though it exonerates, that he took his own pictures. In a sense, this is even more dishonest and devious, as it is with 399. I now have two interests in his 399 base picture: to establish, for my own protection, since his verbal promise was later repeated in writing, that he cribbed, and to establish the date of alteration. I hope you did not mention alteration to him. Did you? Please describe his mm scale so I can help identify that negative at the Archives. If you can recall, any other deviations from mine. Jesus Christ, I now see"I regret I did not bring my own pictures for comparison"! Please try and recall what you did tell him and please be honest if you did blab.

May I also point out to you that you are aware of lawsuit I plan to file and for which I am preparing? Have I not also told you that their refusal to provide what they have can be more useful than its presentation? I agree it is important that we get this picture. You know for how long I have been trying. You know for how long I have been trying to get them to take a picture of it for me on a scale, etc. I have delayed asking to go over all their negatives for several reasons; one is to have a better idea of John's. Another is to give them a chance for more crookedness, which I'd welcome, especially because I think I have all the essential evidence on this. You have not yet seen the new picture I have had taken. I think it shows what you call the notch and I think it is more or less of a "v". The lighting and negle are different than yours, which I think helps. Have you yet tumbled to one of the obvious reasons there ned to be alteration, or did I tell you?

I welcomethe intelligence he did not stop with duplicting one of my pictures.

What he told you of the spectro is true. Also old. It is in WW. Isolation can be to the batch or run. I do not think hex levelled with you on his reasons for suing for it because I think they also come from WW, but he never admits anything like that. His reasons are entirely too inadequate. One would be could they have been of the conjectured type at all. Another is are all but the Connally wrist fragment from the same batch, etc.

JBC chest X-rays: this may be significant. It is not new that the blow was glancing, but it is that no metal shows because there is no doubt it did. This makes me wonder if they also were substituted. Remember how I go into this in WW and PM, with Shires ordering and reading and with the deception by Rankin? I have, by the way, and though I'd hsowed you, the proof that Bell did handle the fragments. It is in the appendic to PM. I have what is as close as I expect to get to a complete tracing, to the cop, etc. Can you explain how she is the key, not any of the others? Re the first complete paragraph on your 4th page, Shaw's testimony corroborates. He said there was more metal missing in the wrist alone, etc.

Fisher-brain also not new. Reread my letters to government and Fisher. I asked Fisher this question, without specifying what he'd asked for but didn't get.

Whether or not radiological record was made, Navy wrote me they turned everything over. I do not believe this precludes their having kept any copies. It is utter nonses to say they did not see the X-rays at the autopsy, that the radiologist turned the results over by phone. They were explained as they were shown to the four agents present, all of whom say this. However, this could be true of those of the extremities. Probing for bullet: he told me this long ago and asked me not to use it, so I didn t even though it was independently volunteered to me by a radiologist. However, there is this obvious possibility: the probing was done before the X-rays were dry. A tiny fragment of bullet is like a fluorescent light in an X-ray. Once the agents saw the "stars" they'd certainly have seen the bigger object and asked about it, had there been a bullet. John's poimt is that only a stupe would probe, because the X-rays would show a bulley.

That is John's ego again when he says Fischer has cancelled because of his suit. It is my correspondecne andx threat of a suit. John filed his suit a year ago. If it were that, Fisher would never have accepted. I do not regard this as material, for other things could also have caused it. but I cite it to give youm an understanding of John. Fisher spoke to him and told him things after he filed his suit.

If you will now reread the third from your last paragreph two things will be clear, in addition to the reason for my opening complaint: despite your repeated assurances, you blabbed about things you were not supposed to talk about and this is a man of enormous ignorance and carelessness. He gave you a remarkable self-indictment of himself as a forensic expert, knowing this little of the basic evidence.

Now let me point out what you should have spotted for yourself: he went to you after going over my work at the copyright office.

Does this not open your eyes even more?

His telegram to me is dated the 15th. He saw you the 16th. The telegram says he has read PM and PM III.

All of this disturbs me no less than I have conveyed. I am more troubled by my own lack of judgement than at your transgressions, for I am old enough to know the limitations of 16-year experience and I now feel I placed too heavy a burden on it. I fear that at some point I'm going to get paranoid as hell, have nothing to do with anyone, go my own way, get my own writing done instead of spending an enormous amount of time trying to inform others and help them with their work, get no one to try and help me, and have much less of the aggravation that is no so burdensome to me.

Do you better understand why I wrote as I did about your Lifton correspondence? You just cannot cope with such people, and this is not from any lack of intelligence or any other fault on your part. It is just that you are honest and haven't yet been subjected to enough of the crookedness in the world, special aspects of which are typified by Nichols and Lifton, who I now suspect are and have been hand in hand for some time.

If I didn't ask you, how did you and John get in touch with each other? Did he initiate it with you? If so, when and how? Did he tell you what he was doing in the east, why a busy man spent this time and money to see a 16-year-old?

Howard, you simple must not do this or anything like it again. You may have done very much harm to what we seek in common and I know you have done what I also know you did not intend, harm to me. I know it puts you in a bad position, but I am already in a worse one, having trusted you with everything I have. I must insiste you once you know those who have made themselves my enemies you have no intercourse whatever with any of them. I cannot very well ask you to return the knowledge I have trusted you with, can I?

Meanwhile, I'd like you to review your meeting in your own mind and report anything that you now might regard in any different kind of light, anything that might have what we might call a counter-intelligence value for me, tell me what he was trying to get from you that he hadn't gotten from the books. Also, did he say anything about me you didn't report, or ask any such questions? He may have been wily enough not to have been so obvious, but let me not overlook the obvious.

You know, Howard, when I was ill and had this enormous amount of my own work to do, I dropped everything and took the time writing a book would have taken to help his suit. This is not because of any great love I bear him. It is because his suit was that incompetent, his knowledge of the law and fact that deficient, I had to do this for all of us. I tell or repeat this so you will understand another aspect of the hazard involved in your blabbing. Sincerely,